

John Randolph to Andrew Jackson, March 28, 1832, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

JOHN RANDOLPH TO JACKSON.

Roanoke, Wednesday morning, March 28, 1832.

My dear Sir, I was guilty of a great omission, in my hurry last night and my zeal to protect yourself from what I know to be a false movement (from a personal acquaintance with facts that I had kept in reserve to be communicated to you orally, because *verba volant, scripta manent* , and because I have no desire to incur the displeasure of Autocrats whose arms stretch from the N. West point of our own continent including a vast indefinite portion even of *it* across Behring's Straits and the whole widest breadth of the other Hemisphere to the N.W. point of Norway, almost to Spitzbergen). In *your* honour and discretion, I have the most unreserved confidence, but our Litany teaches us to pray for deliverance from Battle and Murder and from Sudden Death, and in Case of your death there is no knowing through what hands your papers may pass. For although the first hand to whom you should have entrusted them might prove worthy of your confidence, yet he too might be called by God; and God alone knows into what hands they might fall. I am determined to run some little risk however to inform you that of all the Powers of Europe Russia is beyond all doubt the most *un* friendly to us. This I had an opportunity of *knowing* that my Secretary and yours J. R Clay had not. I had access to sources of information that were shut against him.

The reverse was the case at the breaking out of the French Revolution of July 1830. But such is the abhorrence of the Autocrat for all Liberal Governments*1 that the principles of our own have more than counter-balanced his jealousy of the Maritime preponderance

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of England, In consideration of which he at that time could have given us commercial facilities that will now be denied.

1 Original note: “*Buchanan will be *ramped* at the Tartar's Levees. He is a genuine Cossack: implacable, remorseless and blood thirsty.”

And in my heart I believe that he hates England as much for her Liberal Principles of Government as for putting a hook into his nose and a Curb into his mouth and staying the march of his all devouring Rapacity.

I was right. Nesselrode was disgraced. Lieven preferred the Port Folio and Power and the Countenance of his Sovereign to the Pageant of the Russian Embassy at London in time of Peace. He supplants Nesselrode who never would have been recalled to Court but for the 3 days. That alters the whole affair. The power is transferred to the Conference and Lieven takes Power and pleasure instead of a Bastile with a possible chance for Siberia, and a Polar Stay.

I am very glad that you do not mean to risk the affront of a refusal by Earl Grey to receive your minister. He is the haughtiest of the cold, supercilious proud: Wrapped up in his own self sufficiency and arrogant as if born to a throne. He too has no more good will towards us than *Nicholas*. But it is easy to see that the Ball being set in motion by Lord Althorp's and Mr Stanley's frank and manly avowals on the subject of *Irish Tithe* , no earthly power can now stop it's Career. Whether for weal, or for woe, onward it must go. Forward! Forward! *En avant! En Avant!* (the war cry of Napoleon) is the *word* now. But the struggle will be great and a single battle will not decide between Privilege and Prescription on the one side and a resolute determination to accept nothing short of their Rights on the other. In this state of things I have it in my power to do you and our cause more service than any other man in the *world* , and I would not make this vaunt if I did not make a gratuitous tender of those Services, and I do most heartily rejoice that the circumstances of this case; however otherwise provoking and vexatious; do enable me to

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prove my *disinterestedness*. Send me therefore as soon as you please an unpaid, secret, confidential agent. Write to V. B or whom you will or (if you dare) confide solely to my honour. Give me an Autograph Letter, the hand writing of which ministers can compare with your signature at least, in their possession. Let it be from A. J. to Lord Althorp or Lord Holland (he by the way is *effete*) or Mr Stanley, or to whom you will—I say Lord Althorp the *Soul of Honour*. My character stands high with all parties in England. As a Republican standing up for our free-hold right of suffrage and other old Institutions in Virginia, Lords Harrowby and Calthorpe and Wynford (Late Ch. Justice Best of the Common Pleas), look upon me as a high Aristocrat. Even old Eldon gives me a nod of recognition. The first is a man of Sense and Influence—the rest fools of no weight—besides Harrowby is a temperate Anti-Reformer and his Son Lord Sandon the school fellow of my nephew to whom he was warmly attached, is an enthusiastic ultra, who goes the whole game. He must soon be Earl of Harrowby. It is true that his father turned him out of his borough of Tiverton for voting for *The Bill*. But this was a mere shew of *vigour* to drive Ministers from their purpose, and but for Lord Althorp and Mr Stanley they would have had the fatuity (being out-voted) to yield after the old version of the Constitution of England, affecting deference for the H. of Commons that they never felt; and that no body has felt since old George's and Pitt's Victory over it, headed by Fox and North. I say *George's* Victory for the King won it by his *firmness* (obstinacy, insane insensibility to Danger) and Pitt was frightened at the bare idea of holding out against a vote of the Commons House of Parliament. He was the pupil as well as the Son of the *Great Commoner* who was cheated and cajoled into selling his Power for a bauble, and a *pension* of 3,000 per Annum. It is true that *at first* Lady Hester was the *Peer* as Baroness Chatham, whilst *Mr Pitt* remained a Commoner and pocketed the pension.

But John Bull gullible as he is cannot swallow such a camel as this with his whole pack upon his back. Pitt saw his Errour too late. He *ratted* , became Courtier. George the 3d and Charles Jenkinson laughed in their sleeves to see the awkward predicament of their arch-Enemy: for hatred of Pitt was the *primum mobile* , the great moving principle of the

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Kings mind; and Jenkinson a scholar and a ripe and good one, and a man of antient equestrian family the Heads of which represented Oxfordshire long before that needy pedant James the First thought of selling *hereditary* Knighthood (*Proh! Pudor*) at 1000 pounds per head to any one however ignoble by blood or by occupation or character that was able and willing to pay down the price of the *patent*. Jenkinson had *personal* insults to resent also.

There to fore (as Phil Barbour would say) Knighthood whether by Accolade, or on the field of battle (Knights Bannaret) or even in the Civil Service, as Knights of the Shire, had been a personal dignity altogether; implying personal merit. At first military prowess solely was understood—afterwards *civil* service was admitted as is now the case in the remodelled Institution of the Bath.

The *Reason* of benefit of Clergy; a privilege strictly clerical at it's institution; was to secure to the Priesthood it's arrogant claim of Exemption from trial by the *Civil* Tribunals—thus confining the Kings authority, by submitting *their* crimes however flagrant to the Cognizance of their own Courts alone. To what will not custom reconcile the most enlightened and free of Mankind.

We have reformed our Accompt as to Money, but look at our Weights and measures, one measure for dry another for wet, one for Wine and Spirits another for Cyder, a long and a short hundred, one set of weights for Iron, another for Cotton and Wool, a third for gold and Silver, Avoirdupoise and Troy. Troy again subdivided for Apothecaries, an ounce solid and another ounce liquid—a penny weight for Silver and gold and Jewels, and, scruples and drams for opium and mercury. But I must not let my pen run away with me at this rate.

I stand well with every interest in England. The Person in the ministry most opposed in his heart to the Reform Bill, not excepting Williams Wynn who went out (although not of the Cabinet) is the Chancellor Brougham. It is wormwood to him as too bitter. Ld. Grey is not. There I am Alcibiades, Here Diogenes. My speech *bewrayeth me not*. Like Ali Bey, I can

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sweep the floor of the *Caaba* without being detected as an Impostor. Not that I wish or try to deceive (I am known to all but the vulgar) but sometimes in sport and in self defence among low people, who would despise and insult me if they knew me to be an American or as they would say Yankee. That Buffoon Charles Matthews, whom we have so much caressed has done more than any man alive to injure us with the English, and to do even *him* Justice, Cobbett has done more to dispel their prejudices against us.

The great vulgar despise us too as American, *ipso facto* ; although they believe me to be English by education and every thing but Birth; because they cannot bring themselves to believe it possible that I alone of all the Americans since Mr Jay (and his time is Ante-Diluvian with them) should speak English as well as an Englishman.

N. B. Mr King was *uneducated*. He could neither write, nor speak English as an *English Gentleman*. Neither can any Scotch or Irishman, unless caught young as Dr. Johnson said of Ld. Mansfield [*sic*]. Shall and will is the Shibboleth. In 19 cases of 20, the error lies in putting *will* for *shall*.

In a word, I can do and if you shall permit me, I will do our country and your administration more service for nothing than you can procure from all your Diplomatic Troops abroad, and I serve volunteer and find myself. I do not ask even a Ration.

I beseech you not to impute this to vain glory. It is the effect of accidental circumstances operating upon a good memory. I happen to know England far better than I do the United States or even Virginia, where all is ceaseless and senseless change. Of the various State Constitutions I am not half so well acquainted as I am with the infinite variety of law and customs all over England—even in the same County.

With our leading men *now* , I have but a slight acquaintance compared with my perfect and accurate knowledge of those of G. Britain and Ireland for ages, past. It is true I know all

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about ours from Bacon's Rebellion and even before, until I left off attending to such things some 12 or 15 years ago.

Calhoun, by this time, must be in Hell. He has fallen into the very trap that caught and destroyed Clay. He is self mutilated like the Fanatic that emasculated himself. By the way, Pray observe the Complexion of our Bank Committee. So far as we are concerned, I had rather given them their own Committee; aye and their own Speaker too, Mr Stevenson! Watch the movement of Singleton's brother in law and Son in Law and of the Enquirer and of Calhoun and the nullifiers, *who are Bank men*. They all *row* one way, although they look not two, but twenty ways. I mean no disparagement of Mr Singleton but describe *two publick characters*.

I told my noble friend Hamilton in my letter to him (which you shall see) that the throwing over board Mr Jonas Calhoun was a condition precedent to any aid from *our* quarter, especially from me.

I commend M[y] quondam Secretary and name sake to your protection. Mr Livingston reports most highly of him. I have thought and expressed myself too hardly of Mr L. and of Mr McL. also, but it was the result of artful misrepresentations. For the present Farewell my dear Sir and believe me unalterably and faithfully your's

Thursday night March 29th, 1832, past ten. I have been up all last night. I am stupefied. When I shall have sealed this letter I hope to sleep 12 hours at the least, by dint of Morphia. Come what may I embark in six weeks or less from this date.²

² The following memorandum on a separate sheet, in Jackson's handwriting and dated Apr. 1, 1832, was evidently intended as instructions for his reply to the above letter: "answer having communicated fully and frankly in my former letter to mr. R. of my views and determination, there remains no justifiable cause for doing that secretly which I have determined not to do publicly. Our concerns with England must therefore remain as they are left by mr. V. B. until he returns and we are advised of the feelings that the rejection of

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V. B. has left on the minds of the British Government. when the time arrives to send out a successor then a fit and proper selection will be made. A J.” See the letter of Apr. 12, *post*.